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# Book Review. Vernier, C. G., American Family Law, Vol. 1

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determine questions of fact. Numerous situations are indicated where cases may be changed from legal to equitable by slight alterations in their prayers for relief; these he uses to overcome the argument that a single judge is incapable of determining factual issues.

The remaining pages are devoted largely to discussions of the failure of jury reforms and to the results which would follow the abolition of the system in civil cases. Among these the author includes: swifter and more certain disposition of cases, lowered costs, no appeals on questions of evidence, instructions, and mistrials, and added dignity to the profession.

JEROME A. GROSS.

St. Louis, Mo.

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CASES ON THE LAW OF PERSONAL PROPERTY, by *Harry A. Bigelow*. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, Second Edition, 1931. Pp. xiii, 465.

The course in personal property, where it is retained in the law curriculum, may be taught with one of three purposes primarily in mind: (1) to introduce the student to certain legal conceptions and modes of thought, involving ideas of possession and ownership, the bases for exerting legal claims, the kinds of property interests, and the means of protecting creditors; (2) to relate the law of personal property to the law of real property, with such differentiation as will contribute to an understanding of each; or (3) to lead into a study of the multitudinous forms of modern business property, largely intangible in nature, which are of such great economic if not litigious importance. Professor Bigelow's book has been the best in the field for the first of these purposes since the publication of the original edition in 1917. Elementary in nature and thoroughly teachable, it has won wide acceptance. It is believed that the second edition, in whose preparation Professor Francis W. Jacob has collaborated, will continue the popularity of the book for its purpose. There has been a rearrangement of the cases relating to the common-law actions, about which opinions will differ. The introduction of a greater number of modern cases which bring out the present significance of the topics treated will undoubtedly be generally approved. The slight increase in bulk which thus is occasioned does not create a problem, for the volume even yet will not tax the capacities of a class.

RALPH F. FUCHS.

Washington University School of Law.

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AMERICAN FAMILY LAW, by *Chester G. Vernier*. Vol. I, Stanford University Press, 1931. Pp. xxi, 311.

Professor Vernier has produced a rare type of law book. He and his assistants have expended prodigious labor and care in gathering together the statutes of the forty-eight states, the District of Columbia, Alaska, and

Hawaii, relating to contracts to marry and the essentials of valid marriage. They have stated the effect of these statutes briefly and have supplied accompanying critical references to literature and important cases. The whole is divided into sections which deal with the subquestions into which the main topics fall. The result is an invaluable guide to the study of the American law of marriage.

Inevitably the book invites comparison with Mr. Geoffrey May's recent handbook on *Marriage Laws and Decisions in the United States*.<sup>1</sup> For quick leads into the law of a particular jurisdiction the latter, with its arrangement of the material according to states, is superior. Mr. May also endeavors to include exhaustive references to judicial decisions. These advantages, however, are counterbalanced for the student by the orientation in the history and literature of the subject which Professor Vernier offers.

In the field of family law, or domestic relations, in which statutes play so predominant a part, no adequate permanent means of getting at the material have heretofore been provided in this land of multitudinous sovereign states. Frederic J. Stimson's monumental digest of state statutes, published in 1886, has not been supplemented. No demand for comparative material exists among practitioners. Hence the enormous resources which would be necessary for keeping abreast of legislation as the American Digest and the Reporter System keep abreast of appellate decisions, have not been forthcoming except in specialized fields of business law such as taxation and corporations. Not even an index of state laws exists. It has remained for scholars like Professor Vernier, aided somewhat by funds from research foundations, to provide the facilities without which adequate legal and sociological study cannot be carried on. May their number increase; and may Professor Vernier's promised volume on divorce law and his projected volumes on various aspects of the law of husband and wife and of persons follow as rapidly as possible.

RALPH F. FUCHS.

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1. See book review (1930) 15 ST. LOUIS L. REV. 207.